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A Comparative Analysis of Perspectives Regarding the Management of Multicultural Classrooms Between Educators and Those Who Teach Exclusively in Reception Classes.

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Abstract: The demographic shifts occurring across Europe, and particularly in Greece, have engendered a broadly multicultural landscape. This contemporary multicultural reality has significantly impacted the Greek educational community, where the Greek Ministry of education has implemented Reception/ZEP classes to enhance the school integration of foreign or refugee students, with a particular focus on their proficiency in the dominant language.

To conduct a more in-depth examination of this phenomenon, the perspectives of educators (Sample A) regarding the administration of Intercultural Education within schools that accommodate reception classes were juxtaposed with those of the ZEP teachers (Sample B) assigned to oversee these reception classes.

Notably, it appears that the teachers tasked with managing reception classes face fewer challenges in handling multicultural classrooms and propose targeted interventions to enhance their specialized pedagogical practices. Conversely, educators perceive the management of multicultural classrooms as significantly more challenging than that of traditional classes and advocate for increased compensation commensurate with this specific responsibility. Both groups of educators appear to encounter challenges in effectively managing the linguistic and cultural diversity present among their students, while they recognize that managing a modern multicultural classroom requires adequate preparation. They feel intercultural unprepared to cope with the demands of current intercultural education, while they consider teacher training essential.

Keywords: Educators, ZEP teachers, reception classes, multicultural classroom, Intercultural education

JEL Codes: I21, I24, I29

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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the movement of populations and the process of globalization have precipitated significant transformations within the educational sector. Education has been – and continues to be – confronted with a myriad of new challenges. The concept of intercultural education is articulated in various educational programs aimed at eradicating discrimination while fostering mutual understanding, solidarity, and egalitarianism. These initiatives are designed not only for culturally diverse populations but also for the national populace of the host country (Georgogiannis, 2008). Students from varied cultural backgrounds who engage in continuous migration encounter numerous educational challenges. Intercultural education emerges as a response to address the issues faced by students from different cultural contexts within the educational system. Furthermore, it seeks to facilitate the integration of these groups into the social fabric of the host country while allowing them to preserve their cultural and linguistic identities (Georgogiannis, 2008). Ultimately, intercultural education provides a foundation for redefining the role of education and promotes new values within pedagogical practice.

In contemporary Greek educational institutions, the integration of students from intercultural and bilingual backgrounds is a recognized and established phenomenon (Koiliari, 2015). Foreign or refugee students exhibit varying levels of familiarity with the linguistic, cognitive, cultural, and overall academic demands imposed by the Greek educational system.

To enhance the adaptation of these students within schools, particularly concerning their proficiency in the dominant language, the Greek education system has implemented several measures, including Reception or ZEP classes. These initiatives are designed to promote equitable inclusion of all students within the educational framework through targeted support actions aimed at improving academic performance.

In this particular context, marked by unpredictable transformations and adaptations, educators are necessitated to recalibrate their roles to cultivate their professional identities and effectively meet the contemporary requirements of educational environments. The implementation of reception classes within schools accommodating a considerable number of foreign or refugee students serves not only to provide pedagogical support but also mandates the appointment of dedicated teachers for each reception class. These

recruitments are temporary and funded exclusively through European Union resources (ESPA). The establishment and operation of these educational structures have become essential in actualizing the objectives associated with intercultural education.

Consequently, this research endeavors to juxtapose the perspectives of teachers regarding the management of multicultural classrooms with those responsible for ZEP classes. The study was conducted across eight primary schools at Chios, a Greek island situated at the border with Turkey. The initial sample comprised 90 teachers from diverse specialties working in institutions where reception classes were implemented, while the second sample included the eight teachers specifically tasked with these classes.

The results revealed the intricate nature surrounding the education of refugee and immigrant children and underscored the necessity for ongoing scholarly discourse in this domain. Certain findings exhibited relative homogeneity in content, whereas others displayed significant contrasts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the domain of Pedagogical science, a diverse array of theoretical frameworks has been documented concerning the characteristics and functions of educators. These frameworks have evolved over time, culminating in the conclusion that contemporary teachers must possess competencies and skills adept at navigating the complexities of today's multicultural educational landscape (Ntouskas, 2005, p. 94).

A salient characteristic of our current era, which significantly impacts modern educational institutions, is the incessant movement of populations alongside the broader phenomenon of globalization. It is evident that the parameters for addressing population mobility and the role of nation-states are undergoing gradual transformation, simultaneously accompanied by a reconfiguration of identities across cultural, national, religious, and linguistic dimensions (Hargreaves, 1994, pp. 47-50). The profound demographic shifts instigated by globalization engender a reevaluation of political ideologies, diminish trust in traditional knowledge systems, and erode confidence in scientific authority. Consequently, these transformations exert multifaceted influences on both educational practices and the responsibilities assigned to educators (Hargreaves, op. cit., p. 65).

Ultimately, society operates as a dynamic organism subject to continual change; thus, educational institutions and pedagogical endeavors must adapt accordingly. The modern educator is irrevocably intertwined with the societal context in which they operate, reflecting the evolving dynamics within the cohorts they serve.

The circumstances prevailing in education during the 21st century impact all stakeholders involved therein. Specifically, teachers are increasingly entrusted with supplementary responsibilities aimed at preserving national identity among both foreign and domestic students (Neave, 1998, p. 245). Achieving this necessitates an enrichment of cognitive content along with thoughtfully organized educational materials.

Reception classes instituted to address these aspects of school reality seek to facilitate student integration, adaptation, learning processes, socialization efforts, development trajectories, and overall progress within a vibrant intercultural environment. Furthermore, these classes aim to enhance both the quality and efficacy of educational interventions implemented across various contexts (Mpoutza, 2018).

Although the inception of reception classes can be traced back to the late 1990s—initially serving disparate purposes, the ministerial decision¹, which is renewed every year without significant changes, entitled “Regulations for Educational Priority Zones (ZEP) - Establishment of ZEP or Reception Classes in Primary Education units”, along with subsequent annual circulars derived from it, delineate specific operational guidelines for ZEPs or reception classes. These directives afford primary schools within Greece an opportunity to establish ZEP/Reception Classes through initiatives co-financed by the European Union’s European Social Fund (ESPA), primarily aimed at fostering equitable access and facilitating effective integration for targeted student populations.

From the vantage point of temporary substitute teachers engaged under one-year contracts, it is typically articulated that their *“primary objective lies in promoting proficiency in the Greek language while also providing instructional support across other subjects to aid in ensuring smooth adaptation and retention within the educational system for students hailing from vulnerable social groups, including those exhibiting distinct cultural or religious backgrounds as well as refugee children”*² as it is reported on the ministerial circular of 2020-2021.

¹ Ministerial decision: Φ1/63691/Δ1-ΦΕΚ 1403B/25-04-2017 Available at: <https://www.e-nomothesia.gr/kat-ekpaideuse/upourgike-apophase-ph1-63691-d1-2017.html>

² Ministerial decision: 102635/ΓΔ4/31-07-2020. Available at: <https://dide-new.flo.sch.gr/odigies-gia-tin-idrysi-kai-leitourgia/>

In the context of a multicultural classroom, it is imperative for educators to adhere to an intercultural education model that emphasizes respect for the cultural diversity of international students while fostering their engagement with native peers. Educators must consciously set aside any ethnocentric biases they may hold in order to effectively instill in their students the principles of respect for the "other" and the acknowledgment of the intrinsic value inherent in every culture (Govaris, 2004, p. 65). By appropriately accentuating elements from various cultures, teachers can cultivate an atmosphere conducive to mutual respect and cultural exchange. This approach lays the groundwork for a society characterized by progress and evolution, free from nationalistic ideals and racial stereotypes. Furthermore, it serves as a mechanism to mitigate stereotypical social perceptions; through educational experiences, tensions and conflicts among students representing diverse multicultural identities are significantly alleviated (Hall, Held & McGrew, 2003, p. 105). Ultimately, a safe and supportive learning environment within a multicultural classroom facilitates seamless social interactions among students, allowing them to transcend individual differences on cognitive, cultural, and social levels. In conclusion, the multicultural landscape of contemporary Greek schools underscores the necessity for educators to possess a comprehensive array of didactic and pedagogical expertise alongside communication skills rooted in respect for diversity, empathy, and acceptance of others. The urgency for teacher training in these areas has never been more critical.

Therefore, it is imperative that educators are sufficiently equipped to tackle challenges associated with intercultural pedagogy by implementing suitable pedagogical and instructional strategies that augment their effectiveness in educating all students (Papachristos & Palaiologou, 2002a, p. 128). In the context of teaching, "intercultural readiness" pertains to an educator's capacity to adeptly manage the multifaceted demands inherent in a multicultural educational environment, which includes students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. An educator is deemed interculturally ready when they can competently address issues related to diversity and the potential obstacles that may arise from the interaction and coexistence of varied ethno-cultural groups within society (Papachristos, 2009). Existing literature both internationally and within Greece indicates that teachers must embrace democratic principles and values alongside the ability to navigate diversity within the school context through appropriate methodologies as part of Intercultural education (Garcia & Pugh, 1992, pp. 214-219; Papachristos 2003, pp. 30-42; Banks, 2004, pp. 13-14).

The notion of intercultural readiness encompasses the cognitive competencies that every teacher should attain upon completing their foundational training in Intercultural education as well as those

actively teaching who engage in professional development programs applicable within classroom settings (Georgogiannis, 2006, p. 38). It is significant to note that graduates from Pedagogical Departments frequently report a lack of comprehensive information or training concerning Intercultural education during their foundational studies (Matthaiou, Karatzia-Stavlioti & Spinthouraki, 2001, p. 428). Undergraduate curricula generally exhibit a deficiency in courses dedicated to intercultural training for prospective educators, resulting in an inadequate preparation in this domain (Chiotakis, 2002, p. 82). Furthermore, many teachers do not regard themselves as effective when fulfilling their responsibilities within multicultural classrooms (Karlaira, 2002; UNICEF, 2001, pp. 32-39). In numerous Schools of Education, intercultural education either remains absent as a distinct subject or is offered solely as an elective course (Triga, 2005, p. 48), thereby placing future educators at a disadvantage regarding pertinent topics. Consequently, many teachers seek post-graduate studies or participate in training seminars focused on intercultural education throughout their careers to adequately respond to contemporary educational demands.

In summary, it can be inferred that a teacher's intercultural readiness, essential for effectively managing a multicultural classroom in contemporary educational contexts, comprises the following critical dimensions like (Palaiologou & Evaggellou, 2003, pp.95-96):

1. Fostering critical self-awareness among educators concerning their own ethno-cultural identities and nurturing respect for the identities of others.
2. Enhancing teachers' comprehension of the dynamics of racism and prejudice. Gaining insight into school practices that contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities.
3. Furthermore, acknowledging and valuing the diverse learning styles and prior educational experiences of foreign students while promoting their cultural identities to create an inclusive learning environment.
4. Cultivating high expectations for all students' and fostering a positive communicative atmosphere in the class.
5. Moreover, developing empathy among educators towards foreign students by comprehending their cultural values, establishing effective communication strategies.
6. Recognize and address any emotional, psychological, or communicative challenges faced by foreign students.
7. Mastery of contemporary teaching methods and educational practices is essential for effectively instructing students from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds through suitable pedagogical strategies tailored to individual requirements.

8. Additionally, educators should exhibit competence in designing and producing instructional materials specifically intended for bilingual foreign students, particularly concerning reading and writing skills.
9. Teachers must also be proficient in leveraging new technologies within classrooms characterized by rich multicultural contexts.
10. Establishing collaborative relationships with individuals and institutions capable of providing support for foreign language learners experiencing academic difficulties or behavioral challenges is crucial.
11. To better address the educational needs of foreign students, teachers should investigate alternative methods for gathering information about their lifestyles.
12. Moreover, it is vital for educators to remain informed about research findings related to learning processes, language acquisition, and cultural backgrounds pertinent to various student groups encountered in their classrooms.
13. Finally, teachers should endeavor to develop personal theories regarding socialization and communication with foreign students.
14. In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is imperative for contemporary educators to cultivate a repertoire of behaviors and attitudes that position them as primary exemplars in effectively managing a multicultural classroom.

METHODOLOGY

The present investigation was executed employing a quantitative methodological framework. In the realm of quantitative research, empirical data are assessed in relation to established theoretical constructs. While the quantitative approach was predominant in this study, it is noteworthy that the qualitative comparison between the two groups represented a significant advantage inherent to this methodology (Holton & Burnett, 1997).

Given that this research was undertaken by an individual researcher as part of a doctoral project, it was imperative for the sample size to be both manageable and realistic. Due to constraints in human resources (limited to one researcher), it became necessary to select a sample that was sufficiently representative yet feasible within the confines of a doctoral undertaking.

Consequently, primary school educators teaching in institutions hosting ZEP classes on the island of Chios were selected as the research sample, rather than including all teachers in the region. This selection was essential for two primary reasons: Firstly, if the sample encompassed all educators on the island, validity concerns would arise since many may lack awareness or knowledge regarding reception classes for refugees or foreign students. Only those schools accommodating reception classes compel their educators to engage, either directly or indirectly, with refugee or foreign pupils.

Secondly, subsequent section of this research specifically addresses teachers who are solely responsible for these reception classes (Sample A), totaling eight participants, enabling comparative analysis with responses from all teachers at these particular institutions (Sample B), which includes a total of ninety respondents.

The rationale for this decision stems from the fact that certain schools within the area (Chios Island) provide ZEP classes, totaling eight out of the twenty-eight primary schools on the island as per current planning. To enhance the representativeness of the sample and, consequently, the quality of the study's findings, a particular region was selected that demonstrates a pronounced interest in immigration matters due to its geographical characteristics. The sample ultimately comprised 90 participants in the initial phase and 8 participants in the subsequent phase; while this size renders it representative, it does not lend itself to generalizations for broader conclusions. The outcomes of this research may offer insights into patterns, trends, and pertinent topics warranting further exploration in future studies influenced by demographic factors related to immigration.

Theoretical frameworks may experience adjustments during empirical data analysis, potentially leading to either confirmation or refutation of these frameworks (Kiriazi, 2000). The questionnaire methodology was specifically adopted to explore how intercultural education is managed within Greek educational settings and to achieve stated research objectives. Accompanying this questionnaire was a brief introductory letter aimed at primary school educators in Chios, which provided completion instructions and expressed appreciation for their participation in this academic endeavor.

The research methodology consisted of two distinct phases. In the initial phase, all educators from the eight selected elementary institutions participated in a survey, with the exception of ZEP teachers, whose responses were subjected to separate analysis in the subsequent phase. Data collection during phase one was conducted using a questionnaire method, resulting in 90 completed responses that were systematically organized and analyzed. In phase two, a comparable questionnaire was employed; however, it was adapted into semi-structured interviews conducted either through face-to-face meetings or telephonic conversations with eight instructors from ZEP classes.

The constructed research questionnaire consisted of three distinct sections. The first section (Part A) gathered demographic information pertaining to each participant's personal details (such as gender, nationality, age, educational qualifications, country of origin, etc.). The questions were categorized based on response format into three types: closed-ended questions, mixed-format inquiries, and open-ended questions. A

substantial portion comprised closed-ended questions requiring respondents to choose one or more options from those provided.

The second section of the questionnaire (Part B - 1st thematic area) examined participating teachers' perceptions concerning foreign or refugee children within multicultural educational environments. This segment included various formats such as closed and multiple-choice inquiries. The final section solicited insights into how participating teachers approach intercultural education within their institutions while also seeking recommendations (utilizing closed-type or multiple-choice queries) aimed at self-improvement and broader enhancements within existing educational frameworks designed to facilitate migrant children's integration into Greek schools (Part C - 2nd thematic area).

Upon collection of completed questionnaires, a coding process will ensue followed by an analysis aimed at discerning proposals and innovative methodologies derived from educator responses that facilitate precise inferencing. This process must adeptly integrate and harmonize unique characteristics associated with Chios Island—a notable host location for significant refugee influxes—alongside educators' perspectives concerning this emergent educational paradigm. The research sample comprised ninety participants drawn from a specific geographical locale (Chios Island). Consequently, extrapolating findings across all regions within Greece raises concerns about generalizability due

to varying local experiences with migration-related challenges.

Statistical analysis employed the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), focusing on descriptive statistics inclusive of percentage tables representing the entire sample cohort. It is essential to emphasize that this comparison was inherently qualitative owing to the considerable variance in sample sizes between phase A (90 teachers) and phase B (8 teachers). Additionally, this analysis seeks to contrast the viewpoints of educators teaching in institutions that host ZEP classes with those who are solely involved in reception classes. Specifically, the aim is to identify both the similarities and differences in the management of an intercultural classroom by teachers overseeing reception classes for foreign or refugee students, as compared to their colleagues within the broader school environment where these students are integrated. For methodological precision, we have designated the sample from the initial phase as 'Sample A' or educators and that from the subsequent phase as 'Sample B' or ZEP teachers.

RESULTS

The subsequent analysis encompasses the findings derived from the demographic data as well as at the next thematic area of the questionnaire. These elements facilitate the drawing of conclusions pertaining to a comparative assessment of the perspectives held by educators from the two samples regarding the management of multicultural classrooms.

Table 1: Comparative Gender Distribution.

VALID	EDUCATORS		ZEP TEACHERS	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
Male	32	35,5	1	12,5
Female	58	64,4	7	87,5
Total	90	100,0	8	100,0

Table 2: Comparative Age Distribution.

VALID	EDUCATORS		ZEP TEACHERS	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
< of 30	12	13,3	1	12,5
31 to 40	25	27,7	6	75,0
41 to 50	33	36,7	1	12,5
50 and more	20	22,3	0	0,0
Total	90	100,0	8	100,0

Concerning personal characteristics, it is obvious that a considerable majority of participants in both samples are female; specifically, in Sample B, the ratio of women to men is 7 to 1 (Table 1). Conversely, age demographics portray a divergent scenario: over 50% of educators (in Sample A) are aged over 40 years, while nearly all participants in ZEP teachers (Sample B)

are under 40 years old (Table 2). This observation implies that instructors within reception classes tend to be significantly younger on average than their colleagues. It is also pertinent to note that across both samples, the surveyed educators reported being married and having children.

Table 3: Comparative Years of Service Distribution.

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>< 10</i>	7	7,8	5	62,5
<i>11 to 20</i>	22	24,4	3	37,5
<i>21 to 30</i>	38	42,2	0	0,0
<i>31 and more</i>	23	25,6	0	0,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

An examination of professional experience among the two participant cohorts reveals significant disparities. Approximately 67% of respondents in educators possess more than 20 years of teaching experience, with half exceeding 30 years of total

professional engagement. In contrast, ZEP teachers reported having less than 10 years of teaching experience, indicating that educators of sample A exhibit markedly greater professional experience compared to their counterparts of sample B.

Table 4: Comparative Employment status distribution.

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>Permanent teacher</i>	36	40	0	0,0
<i>Non-permanent teacher</i>	24	26,6	8	100,0
<i>Permanent specialized teacher</i>	14	15,5	0	0,0
<i>Non-Permanent specialized teacher</i>	6	6,7	0	0,0
<i>Non-Permanent special education teacher</i>	10	11,1	0	100,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

Furthermore, a pronounced difference is noted regarding employment status; approximately 55% of participants in Sample A are permanent faculty members (including both general educators and specialists), whereas all individuals in Sample B are classified as substitute educators. Within educators A exists a subset of substitute teachers (26%), alongside specialist educators and those engaged in special education (approximately 17% collectively), while ZEP teachers consist exclusively responsible for reception classes.

The findings indicate that on one hand, the majority of educators in Sample A are permanently employed and demonstrate commendable levels of educational attainment along with greater age and significantly more professional experience compared to their counterparts in Sample B. On the other hand, all teachers in Sample B serve as substitutes; they tend to be younger and possess higher educational qualifications but have relatively limited professional experience when contrasted with the educators from Sample A.

In terms of educational qualifications, a majority of instructors from educators (40%) reported participation in mandatory training or degree equivalency seminars; however, only 26% indicated possession of a postgraduate (master's) diploma, and 22% completed a training program. In contrast, all ZEP teachers asserted they hold a postgraduate (master's) diploma, with 87.5% additionally reporting completion of a training program. Furthermore, concerning English proficiency, 40% of educators assessed their English skills as at a "good level," while 31% acknowledged complete unfamiliarity with the language. In stark contrast, half of the teachers from Sample B rated their English proficiency as excellent, with an additional 37.5% categorizing it as "very good." Regarding computer literacy, the majority within educators (42%) identified their computer skills as good, while 25% rated them as excellent; conversely, every respondent from ZEP teachers claimed to possess excellent computer knowledge.

Concerning the essential knowledge and skills required for educators to proficiently navigate a multicultural classroom, a notable divergence in perspectives arises between the two teacher cohorts. Educators from sample A highlighted attributes such as patience, empathy, respect, solidarity, and acceptance of diversity, qualities that emphasize effective communication skills among teachers. These characteristics were subsequently followed, though with less frequency, by traits indicative of modern professionalism in teaching, including the mitigation of biases and stereotypes, ongoing training, adaptability, and the achievement of educational objectives within a multicultural framework. The collective response encompassing all aforementioned qualities received only a modest percentage of endorsements. In contrast, this composite response was endorsed by 87.5% of participants from sample B. Within this context, eight educators responsible for ZEP classes argued that managing a multicultural classroom necessitates a multifaceted role for teachers that integrates professional characteristics alongside both knowledge and cognitive

virtues. They further articulated specific evidence-based recommendations such as differentiated instruction, fostering a positive classroom environment, promoting equity, and enhancing intercultural readiness among

educators. Notably, this latter concept illustrates that certain educators within sample B possess comprehensive awareness of Intercultural education principles.



Figure 1: Educators’ Knowledge & skills

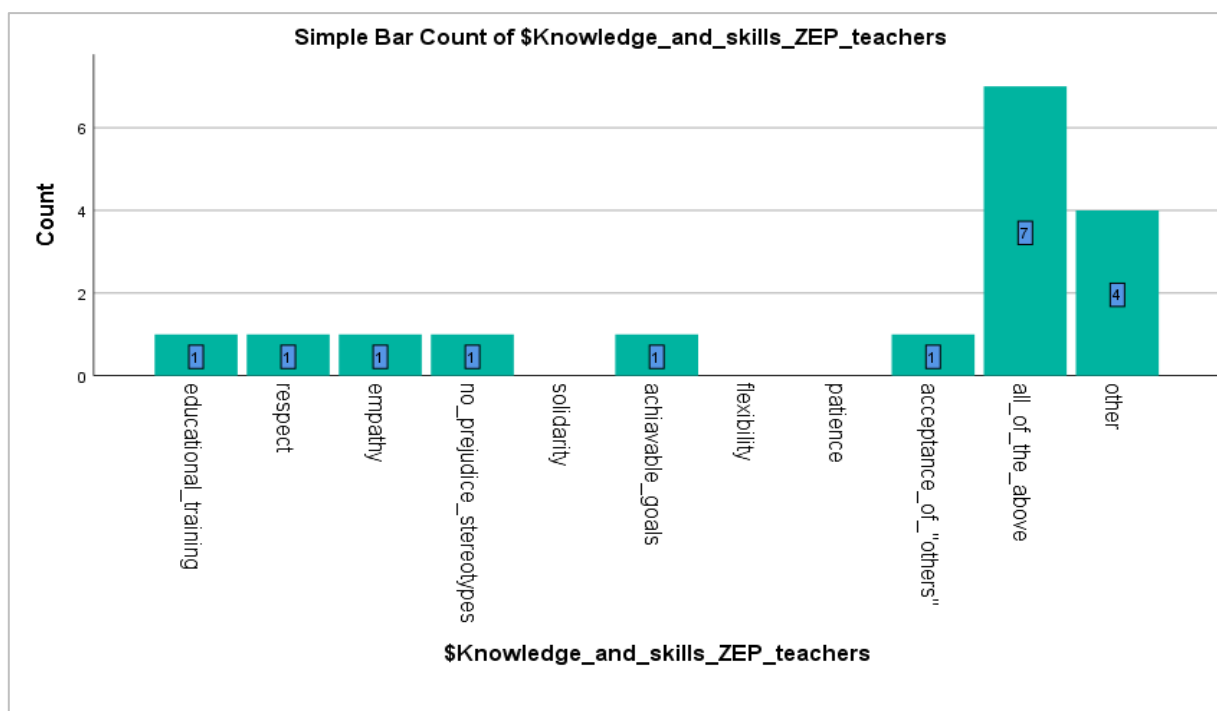


Figure 2: ZEP teachers’ knowledge & skills

Regarding to educators' views on managing an intercultural classroom, the initial inquiry required teachers from both samples to identify the challenges they face in this context. In response to this multiple-choice question, all teachers in sample A identified linguistic communication barriers with their foreign or

refugee students alongside concerns related to cultural diversity. Following closely behind was the issue of varying school environments. Conversely, teachers from sample B unanimously reported encountering challenges associated with linguistic communication added the use of methods like "body language", imitations of images

etc. and cultural diversity as well; however, some noted under "other" that their students often lack foundational cognitive backgrounds. Consequently, it can be concluded that there exists a convergence of perspectives between educators in sample A and those in sample B; nevertheless, the latter group additionally emphasized concerns regarding their refugee students' limited cognitive backgrounds.

When asked whether they perceive managing a ZEP classroom as more challenging than overseeing a conventional classroom setting, a significant majority of

teachers in sample A expressed agreement with this assertion. In stark contrast, most teachers in sample B disagreed. This discrepancy highlights a fundamental divergence in viewpoints; specifically, educators from sample B justified their perspective by asserting that instruction within a reception classroom does not fundamentally differ from teaching in a conventional setting but merely requires appropriate preparation on their part and constitutes an integral aspect of their responsibilities as primary education instructors rather than being viewed as an isolated task.

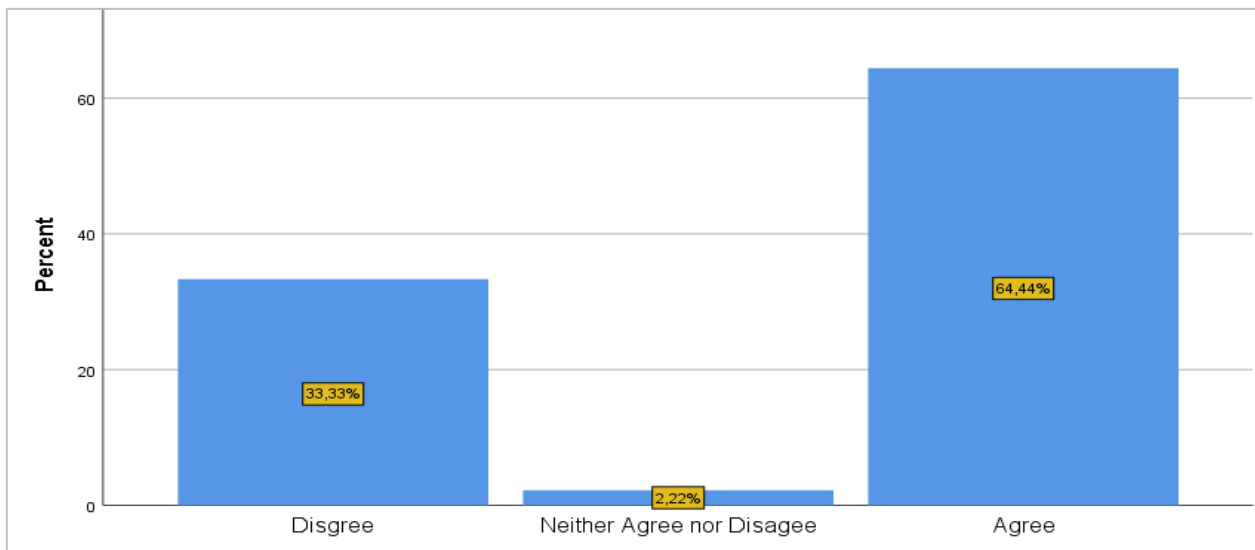


Figure 3: Educators' management of a ZEP class VS a typical class

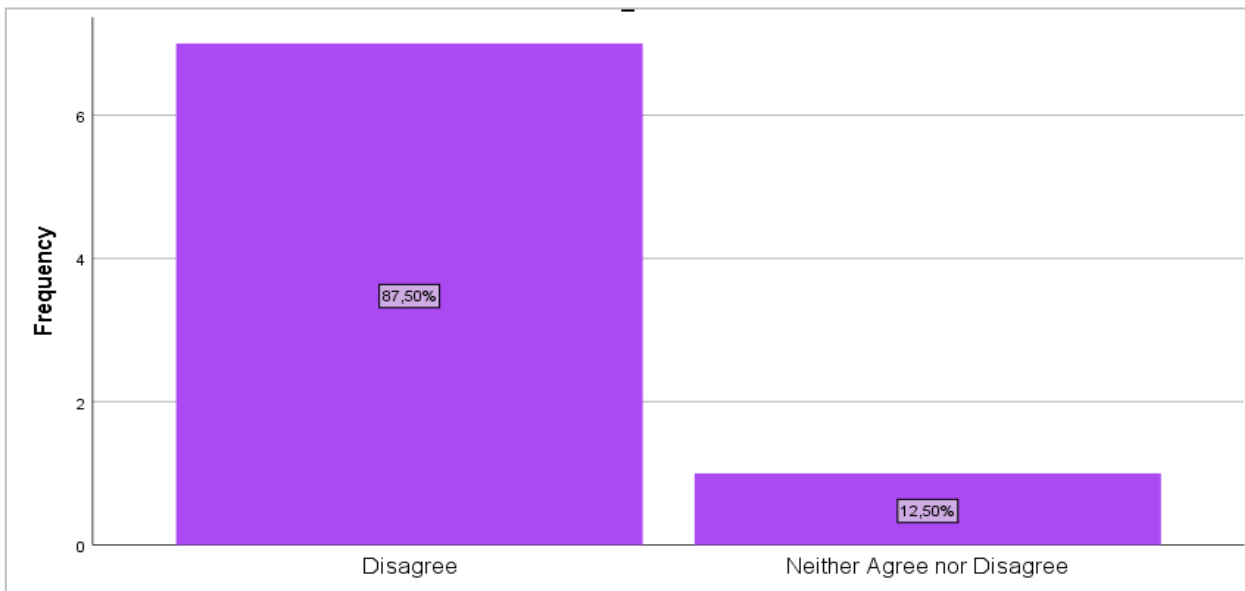


Figure 4: ZEP teachers' management of a ZEP class VS a typical class

Regarding whether educators consider current support for reception classes provided by the school community to be excessive, there emerged notable consensus among teachers in sample A who mostly

expressed negative sentiments toward such support. Conversely, all teachers in sample B articulated similar negative perceptions indicating complete alignment between the two samples.

Table 4: Current Support of ZEP classes.

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	19	21,1	0	0,0
<i>No</i>	71	78,8	8	100,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

When evaluating the adequacy of Intercultural education support provided by Greece's Ministry of Education, Religion and Sports, the majority of educators expressed disagreement regarding its sufficiency while an overwhelming majority from ZEP teachers voiced

discontent due to delays in initiating reception classes coupled with inadequate staffing levels and insufficient appropriate textbooks alongside an overarching perception that Intercultural education is marginalized relative to formal educational programs.

Table 5: Comparative support from the Greek government.

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	22	24,4	0	0,0
<i>No</i>	68	75,6	8	100,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

Concerning social interactions facilitated for foreign or refugee students through ZEP classes respondents from sample A displayed positivity with over 70% agreement, a sentiment echoed unanimously by all participants from sample B (100%). They substantiated their views by noting how expedited acquisition of Greek language skills through reception classes promotes social interaction among refugee students and their peers both inside and outside school

settings. Effective communication is crucial for refugees seeking engagement with local communities; Thus, participation in ZEP classes represents for these students not just significant opportunities but also pathways alongside additional optional courses offered by NGOs within hosting areas. Consequently, both teacher samples exhibit concordance on this particular aspect pertaining to Intercultural education.

Table 6: Comparative Social Interaction via ZEP Classes.

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	0	0,0	0	0,0
<i>Disagree</i>	8	8,8	0	0,0
<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	17	18,8	0	0,0
<i>Agree</i>	42	46,7	8	100,0
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	23	25,6	0	0,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

In the subsequent investigation into the potential effects of students' appeals on their peers within the educational environment, significant discrepancies were observed between educators from sample A and those from sample B. The instructors in sample A predominantly recognized curiosity, exemplified by an interest in "the different", with a representation of 19.6%, followed by concerns regarding inequalities, and then indifference at 15.7%. In contrast, issues such as verbal violence, bullying, confusion, and mercy were reported with markedly lower percentages of 9.8%. Conversely, the responses from teachers in sample B did not reflect similar distributions; this cohort primarily indicated rejection as their primary response, followed by mercy and curiosity about "the different," with indifference registering a slightly lower percentage. This data elucidates a distinct hierarchy of emotional responses among educators in sample A relative to their

counterparts in sample B. It is noteworthy that teachers in sample A observe these behaviors within their classrooms during interactions involving refugee or foreign students alongside local peers, as well as during recess periods. In contrast, instructors from sample B report witnessing these emotions not only during instructional time and breaks but also primarily through student accounts. Specifically, they indicate that instances of rejection are most prevalent at the beginning of the academic year when communication between refugee students and local students is largely absent. Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge that rejection can manifest bidirectionally; refugee students may choose to associate exclusively with fellow nationals during breaks due to shared linguistic capabilities. Nevertheless, ZEP teachers clarify that these sentiments tend to diminish over the course of the academic year.

Table 7: Comparative \$ Causes

	<i>Educators Responses</i>		<i>ZEP Teachers Responses</i>		
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
<i>\$causes_to other_students^a</i>	<i>Bodily_Violence</i>	12	3,9%	0	0,0%
	<i>Verbal_Violence</i>	30	9,8%	0	0,0%
	<i>School_Intimidation</i>	30	9,8%	0	0,0%
	<i>Repulsion_Rejection</i>	18	5,9%	8	29,6%
	<i>Mercy</i>	24	7,8%	8	29,6%
	<i>Query_Interest</i>	60	19,6%	8	29,6%
	<i>Confusion</i>	30	9,8%	0	0,0%
	<i>Inequalities</i>	54	17,6%	0	0,0%
	<i>Nothing</i>	48	15,7%	3	11,1%
	<i>Other</i>	0	0,0%	0	0,0%
	<i>Total</i>	306	100,0%	27	100,0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

In addressing the subsequent inquiry concerning whether educators responsible for reception classes should receive a position allowance, it is significant that a substantial majority of educators in sample A expressed agreement, whereas teachers in sample B unanimously disagreed. This observation underscores a pronounced divergence; as previously

highlighted, educators in sample B do not regard teaching in reception classes as an exceptional role. They contend that such responsibilities do not exceed their designated teaching hours or the scope of their duties compared to other faculty members within the institution, thereby negating any justification for additional compensation.

Table 8: Comparative Benefit of Place

<i>VALID</i>	<i>EDUCATORS</i>		<i>ZEP TEACHERS</i>	
	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>	<i>PERCENT (%)</i>
<i>Yes</i>	56	62,2	0	0,0
<i>No</i>	34	37,8	8	100,0
<i>Total</i>	90	100,0	8	100,0

Regarding whether instructors engaged in reception classes believe they should have received training in Intercultural education, an overwhelming majority from sample A affirmed this necessity, with 90% expressing positive sentiments. This perspective was similarly echoed by educators in sample B who also responded affirmatively. Building upon this consensus, participants were invited to suggest specific types of training deemed appropriate for teachers assigned to reception classes. However, unlike previous inquiries where agreement was evident between both samples, here a lack of consensus emerged. Predominantly, educators from sample A recommended intercultural

training seminars. In contrast, those from sample B prioritized acquiring a relevant postgraduate qualification before attending training seminars. Furthermore, this latter group advocated for free training seminars provided by organizations such as SEP³ or other authoritative bodies specifically designed to meet the needs of students within ZEP classes. This perspective is particularly compelling; while they acknowledge the importance of foundational knowledge in Intercultural education, they argue that specialized training could significantly enhance the effectiveness of their pedagogical practices.

Table 9: Comparative \$ Training Type Frequencies

	<i>Educators Responses</i>		<i>ZEP Teachers Responses</i>		
	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
<i>\$training_type^a</i>	<i>Training_Seminars</i>	74	67,3%	4	28,6%
	<i>Master_Degree_Studies</i>	30	27,3%	8	57,1%
	<i>Phd_degree</i>	6	5,5%	0	0,0%
	<i>Other</i>	0	0,0%	2	14,3%
	<i>Total</i>	110	100,0%	14	100,0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

³ SEP: Refugee education coordinators Available at <https://pdeattikis.gr/index.php/services/useful-docs/send/9-refugees-education/27-fek-2985>

In response to inquiries concerning their feelings of anxiety regarding acceptance from their foreign or refugee students, a substantial majority of educators—over 75%—expressed affirmative sentiments. Notably, all educators in sample B reflected

this perspective. Consequently, it is inferred that both groups of teachers experience anxiety related to their acceptance by students, a phenomenon seemingly impervious to the cultural diversity inherent within the student population.

Table 10: Comparative Educators' Anxiety

VALID	EDUCATORS		ZEP TEACHERS	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	0	0	0	0,0
<i>Disagree</i>	19	21,1	0	0,0
<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	3	3,3	0	0,0
<i>Agree</i>	57	63,3	8	100,0
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	11	12,2	0	0,0
Total	90	100,0	8	100,0

Furthermore, an analysis of the final question addressing their perceived capacity to meet the demands of Intercultural education revealed a notable divergence between educators from sample A and those from sample B. The majority within the first sample exhibited neutrality (53%), indicating neither agreement nor disagreement with the statement. This suggests an underlying apprehension among these educators; it is significant to observe that negative responses comprised 25%, while positive affirmations accounted for only 22%. Thus, a considerable segment of respondents in the

first sample feels adequately prepared to confront the challenges associated with contemporary Intercultural education. In stark contrast, educators from the second sample universally provided negative responses (100%), indicating that despite any relevant training they may have received, most do not perceive themselves as fully equipped to fulfill their specific educational responsibilities. Some participants articulated that education, particularly intercultural education, operates as a dynamic entity necessitating ongoing awareness and information on their part for optimal effectiveness.

Table 11: Comparative Educators' Capability.

VALID	EDUCATORS		ZEP TEACHERS	
	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Disagree</i>	23	25,6	8	100,0
<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	47	52,2	0,0	0,0
<i>Agree</i>	14	15,6	0,0	0,0
<i>Strongly Agree</i>	6	6,7	0,0	0,0
Total	90	100,0	0,0	100,0

DISCUSSIONS

This study delineates a methodology and research tools that encompass both advantageous features and inherent limitations. The submission of a specific research objective facilitated the comparative analysis of the perspectives held by primary school teachers in institutions with reception classes, alongside those educators specifically tasked with these classes. Consequently, this approach yields impartially and comprehensive findings regarding the management of a modern multicultural classroom.

Nonetheless, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. Primarily, the teacher sample selection is relatively small and disproportionate in terms of population representation. Notably, the second sample comprising teachers responsible for reception classes is

limited compared to the first; however, this discrepancy can be rationalized by the unique structure of educational institutions that designate only one teacher per reception class, thereby creating significant population variances between the two samples.

Another limitation pertains to the design of the questionnaire, which was tailored for completion by primary education teachers residing and working on the island of Chios. This geographical context was specifically chosen for its relevance to this research due to an influx of immigrants and refugees over the past decade, which has directly influenced the student demographic on the island and necessitated adaptations from educators accustomed to different circumstances. Consequently, this investigation serves as a case study that holds substantial significance not only for the educational community but also for stakeholders

involved in migration issues. Therefore, while generalizations from this research are not feasible, comparisons may be drawn with findings from other regions, both within Greece and beyond, that similarly grapple with migration challenges. Additionally, longitudinal comparisons with emerging educational data could enhance our understanding and implementation of contemporary intercultural education principles. Ultimately, migration dynamics involving refugees and immigrants in Greece remain a persistent topic of interest and represent an inexhaustible avenue for scholarly inquiry.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this analysis has illuminated both significant similarities and pronounced differences among the respondents from the two samples. Initially, it is observed that all educators in sample A are over the age of 40, possessing considerable professional experience and holding permanent employment positions. In contrast, the teachers instructing reception classes are predominantly under 40 years old, have some teaching experience, yet are employed on a temporary basis as substitute instructors. A significant disparity is also evident in the educational qualifications of the two groups; educators in group B possess at least a master's degree in education and demonstrate proficient knowledge of English and computer skills, which is not representative of the majority of teachers in group A.

In the subsequent thematic section, further disagreements emerged between the two teacher samples regarding the requisite knowledge and skills necessary for effectively managing a multicultural classroom. Educators in sample A prioritized communication skills over professional competencies. Conversely, a substantial portion of sample B contended that a contemporary educator should embody a comprehensive set of professionalism, skills, and applied knowledge to adequately address the complexities inherent in multicultural classroom management. Additionally, several recommendations were articulated by teachers from ZEP classes, emphasizing differentiated instruction, fostering a positive classroom atmosphere, promoting equity, and enhancing intercultural readiness among educators—factors contributing to a more holistic understanding of what constitutes an effective modern teacher.

Concerning the challenges encountered in managing multicultural classrooms, both groups appear to prioritize these difficulties similarly: linguistic and cultural diversity is regarded as paramount, followed by integration within varying school environments. Nonetheless, instructors within ZEP classrooms underscore an added challenge stemming from their students' limited cognitive backgrounds relative to their chronological ages; this necessitates forming learning subgroups based on cognitive levels rather than age for refugee or immigrant students.

For educators in reception classes, these aforementioned challenges do not seem to deter them significantly; they assert that managing a multicultural classroom does not present greater demands than those found in conventional elementary classrooms. They emphasize that appropriate preparatory measures are essential for educators. In contrast, a majority of teachers within sample A express that they perceive managing a multicultural classroom to be more challenging than dealing with traditional settings.

Both educator groups concur that the school community endeavors to support the establishment of reception classes while simultaneously expressing dissatisfaction with the Greek Ministry of Education's, Religion and Sports inadequate support for such programs. This inadequacy is primarily attributed to late commencement dates each academic year and the temporary recruitment processes for ZEP class instructors which ultimately undermine the integrity of these institutions.

Moreover, there exists agreement between both groups concerning social interaction facilitated through reception class initiatives. The enhancement of Greek language acquisition sought within ZEP classes frameworks promotes social engagement between refugee or immigrant students and local populations while concurrently bolstering their self-esteem.

There exists a divergence of opinion among two groups of educators regarding the perceived impact that foreign or refugee students may exert on their local peers. The first group posits that local students exhibit curiosity towards the differences and disparities presented by these foreign or refugee individuals, viewing this as an initial response. Conversely, the educators responsible for reception classes contend that local students primarily experience feelings of compassion intertwined with mutual rejection, stemming from challenges in communication. Nonetheless, both factions concur that such reactions are ephemeral and predominantly manifest at the commencement of lessons in reception classes; they subsequently diminish throughout the academic year without eliciting any further impacts to local students.

Despite a consensus between these two groups concerning their preparation in intercultural content, there is advocacy for comprehensive training seminars of substantial duration. The reception class teachers advocate for obtaining pertinent postgraduate qualifications alongside seminars, emphasizing the necessity for targeted introductory training facilitated by relevant authorities and educational bodies (SEPs). This training aims to equip educators with essential knowledge regarding the origins, cultures, customs, and other pertinent information about the foreign or refugee student demographic they will be supporting in their classrooms. Educators from sample B assert that such

seminars would prove invaluable as they would enhance their preparedness to better serve their students.

Furthermore, both groups share a common perspective regarding teachers' lingering anxiety concerning acceptance by their foreign or refugee students, an anxiety comparable to that experienced within more conventional classroom settings. Consequently, it appears that educators do not experience diminished anxiety levels when addressing a student population characterized by diverse origins or cultures.

However, a lack of consensus emerges regarding teachers' self-perceived readiness to address the demands inherent in contemporary intercultural education. While many educators from sample A express uncertainty about their preparedness, split evenly between those who feel equipped and those who do not, the entirety of sample B asserts unpreparedness to meet modern intercultural educational requirements.

In summary, it is evident that teachers engaged more directly with foreign or refugee students tend to propose specific strategies for effectively managing multicultural classrooms. Despite varying levels of education among these teachers, they uniformly regard ongoing professional development as essential in fulfilling their specialized educational responsibilities. In contrast, other instructors within the institution appear to view teaching within a multicultural context as distinctly different; thus, they request additional compensation through position allowances while proposing attendance at fixed-duration training programs. Their indecisiveness regarding intercultural preparedness raises concerns when juxtaposed with reception class teachers who unequivocally report feeling unready for this challenge. Overall observations reveal that both teacher samples continue to grapple with acceptance anxieties related to foreign or refugee students while recognizing an imperative need for additional training alongside concerns about intercultural readiness. This leads to the conclusion that contemporary educators diverge significantly from past stereotypes of authoritative figures; rather, they embody active participants within a dynamic educational ecosystem requiring ongoing awareness and self-improvement to meet its evolving standards.

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